

Advisory Council On Historic Preservation

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BALANCING HISTORIC PRESERVATION NEEDS
WITH THE OPERATION OF HIGHLY TECHNICAL OR
SCIENTIFIC FACILITIES FEATURED IN PUBLICATION BY
ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation has issued a new publication, Balancing Historic Preservation Needs with the Operation of Highly Technical or Scientific Facilities. This publication recommends ways in which the continual need of scientific and technical institutions to upgrade or modify their facilities or equipment should address the historic nature of many such institutions.

The Council, which administers the Section 106 review of the effects of Federal and federally supported undertakings on historic properties, encourages the consideration of preservation values early in an agency's planning process, and the issues raised throughout the text illustrate this.

Preservation and scientific and technical needs both addressed

The report identifies several ways in which historic preservation needs could be reconciled with the ongoing operational needs of scientific and technological institutions. These include the

rejection of the assumption that policies and procedures fostered by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) are appropriate for the majority of Federal activities but inappropriate for scientific research and development; the acknowledgement on the part of Federal agencies engaged in scientific research of the national significance of their historic legacy; the need for the historic preservation community to become familiar with the characteristics and needs of scientific and technological institutions and the concomitant need for the scientific community to become familiar with historic values. Most important, the report affirmed the flexibility of Council regulations and the Section 106 review process in accommodating the interests of both scientific research and operations and historic preservation.

Highlights of the recommendations to Congress

The report asked Congress to reaffirm the Nation's commitment to historic preservation by upholding the existing preservation program. Suggestions concerning how this might be accomplished included the rejection of individual or project requests for legislative waivers of historic preservation statutes and the encouragement of public education programs as a condition for future authorizations of major scientific or technological programs. The report also calls for the issuance of a joint policy statement by the Council and affected Federal agencies acknowledging the sensitive relationship between scientific research and the evolving history of science. Emphasizing the need for better cooperation between the preservation and museum communities and relevant Federal agencies, the report encouraged the exploration of innovative ways to minimize the costs of historic preservation; it also recommended that affected agencies, in cooperation with the Council, examine current administrative procedures for historic preservation.

About the report

The report was written in response to a joint request from the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands and the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. Its findings and recommendations are based on field visits to numerous affected facilities, as well as meetings with scientists, engineers, historians, facility managers, museum curators, and preservation professionals. The Council also solicited public comments, reviewed past Section 106 cases and existing agency programs, and reviewed National Park Service research used in preparation of two relevant National Historic Landmark theme studies. The photographs provided throughout the text of such sites as Yerkes Observatory, the Marshall Spaceflight Center, and Langley Research Center offer excellent examples of the methods discussed in the text.

This publication is expected to be widely used by Federal agencies who manage or assist historically significant scientific or technical facilities. Given the growing number of those facilities and their equipment as time passes, it is clear that addressing historic preservation needs appropriately will be an important preservation issue in the new decade.

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation is an independent Federal agency established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The Council reviews Federal actions and projects that affect historic properties and works with other Federal agencies to avoid or reduce harm to those properties. The Council also advises the President and Congress about preservation matters.

John F.W. Rogers of Washington, D.C., is chairman of the Council. Its membership consists of eight private citizens (including the chairman), four Federal agency heads, a governor, and a mayor, all appointed by the President; the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture; the Architect of the Capitol; the chairman of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and president of the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers. The Council is headquartered in Washington, D.C.

Single copies of Balancing Historic Preservation needs with the Operation of Highly Technical or Scientific Facilities are available without charge while supplies last. To order, please contact the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW., Suite 809, Washington, DC 20004, or call (202) 786-0503.

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